United Nations A/51/PV.15

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first Session

15th plenary meeting
Monday, 30 September 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . . (Malaysia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Nsanze (Burundi), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The Acting President: The first speaker is the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania, His Excellency Mr. Tritan Shehu, on whom I now call.

Mr. Shehu (Albania) (*interpretation from French*): Let me begin by expressing my warmest congratulations to Mr. Razali Ismail on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly as well as my best wishes for his success. I am pleased also to take this occasion to convey my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral for the excellent manner in which he guided the proceedings of the Assembly during the previous session. We wish also to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his invaluable contribution and his tireless efforts in effectively steering the Organization.

Despite many difficulties and financial problems, the United Nations is striving to play its irreplaceable role in the service of peace and security through peacekeeping operations and the promotion of international cooperation. The United Nations Blue Helmets have already become symbols of hope in the major areas of conflict throughout the world. The Albanian Government sincerely hopes that a lasting peace will be established in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Burundi, Liberia, and everywhere else.

The United Nations is undergoing the most severe financial crisis in its history. This year alone, the Organization ran out of money in its regular budget three times and was therefore forced to borrow funds from its peacekeeping operations budget. The tasks of today and the challenges of tomorrow require a general reform of the entire United Nations system. Albania has actively participated in the debate on the preparatory process to reform the Security Council within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council. Albania is in favour of increasing the size of the Council by two permanent seats: Germany and Japan. We also believe that options should be considered that relate to a broader representation of Member States, in order to make the Council more efficient and better able to fulfil its mandate.

Revitalization of the Economic and Social Council must be part of the reform process. We all firmly believe that as long as wide economic gaps exist between North and South, and East and West, several peoples and countries will face key problems related to their survival, and risks of tension, conflicts and regional hostility will prevail. For this reason, reform of the Security Council will not aid the cause of global peace and stability if it is

96-86333 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

not accompanied by an equally effective reform of the Economic and Social Council.

After a long 50 years of communist rule, Albania has now been a democracy for five years. During this period of democratic reform, it has had to face innumerable major problems, including its communist heritage, with its associated spirit of class struggle; and its extreme poverty and strict isolation. The country's transition was rendered yet more difficult by the situation in the region, which was weighted down by the crisis in the former Yugoslavia and the related application of the sanctions regime for several years. Nonetheless, Albania has been able to evolve from a one-party to a multiple-party system; from repression to the establishment of a State based on the rule of law and on respect for human rights and minorities; from a highly centralized and depressed economy to a growing, free-market economy; and from isolationism to openness to Euro-Atlantic integration.

Albania's gross domestic product has increased annually, from 11 per cent in 1992 to 15 per cent in 1996. Inflation fell 400 per cent in 1992 and now stands at 7.5 per cent in 1996. Our national currency's exchange rate has gained some stability, and our foreign debt has been paid. Although five years ago the economy was totally centralized, privatization is now proceeding rapidly in all the major economic sectors; at present 75 per cent of overall production comes from the private sector. The unemployment rate has dropped from 39 per cent in 1992 to 12 per cent in 1996. Within four years, Albania was able to completely liberalize prices.

Clearly, transforming a centralized economy into a market economy is difficult and sometimes painful, especially for certain economic sectors and for certain segments of the population. I should like to take this opportunity to again sincerely thank the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Monetary Fund and a number of United Nations specialized agencies for the valuable assistance they have provided to my country during this period of transition. We are confident that these institutions will continue to help Albania.

Over the past four years, Albania's prestige in the international arena has increased considerably, giving proof of its priority Euro-Atlantic orientation. Albania is already a member of the Council of Europe and an active participant in the Partnership for Peace, and is working for its full integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. In this regard Albania highly appreciates the support of the member States of the European Union and is convinced that the time has come to accelerate the process of Albania's integration. We also welcome the current progress being made in solidifying our relations with the United States, which the Albanians consider to be the champion of democracy and freedom. We are confident that these relations, which are of great importance to Albania, will continue to develop.

Albania's regional policy is based on a desire to promote peace and stability in the Balkans. Given the geo-strategic position of Albania, the deteriorating situation of those Albanians living in exile in other Balkan countries, and the prolonged crisis in the former Yugoslavia, the Albanian Government's significant contribution to regional peace and stability demonstrates its willingness to establish regional cooperation in line with Euro-Atlantic trends. Determined to continue this policy and to increase its contribution, Albania hosted the first Conference of South-Balkans Defence Ministers, which served as a first step leading to the Conference of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, held in Sofia some months later. As part of this contribution, my country has just established a peacekeeping unit, now serving in Zadar, Croatia within the framework of the Implementation Force (IFOR).

The Albanian Government continues to believe that the question of the Balkans requires greater attention by the international community and by the United Nations in particular. The bitter history of the region and the prolonged conflict of recent years have proved clearly that the threat of war always looms large in countries where ultra-nationalism and chauvinism hold sway. We all are aware of the importance of the Dayton Agreement in resolving the conflict in the Balkans. We have always stressed the importance of identifying the major cause of that conflict: Serb ultra-nationalism.

While making a serious effort to assist in the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, the Government of the Republic of Albania wishes once again to draw the attention of the United Nations to the serious problem of Kosovo. In the 1980s, Kosovo — more than 90 per cent of whose population consists of Albanians who have lived on their own territory for thousands of years — was the first to speak of the danger that Serb ultra-nationalism posed to the territories of the former Yugoslavia. National chauvinism; ethnic intolerance; racial, economic and religious

discrimination; "ethnic cleansing"; and acts of violence and repression against an entire population — characteristic features of Serb policy — were demonstrated for the first time in Kosovo. In fact, the crisis in the former Yugoslavia began in Kosovo, though at that time the international community paid scant attention to what the Albanians were saying. It was not until the crisis became a bloody conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina that proper attention was paid.

The Kosovo issue must be duly examined and treated in the spirit of the Dayton Agreement. It is now considered one of the serious international issues that must be resolved, and it has been the subject of several documents and decisions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and of the United Nations. However, the situation in Kosovo is still tense and volatile. The fact that up to now an armed conflict between the Albanians living in Kosovo and the Serbs has been avoided — or rather, resisted — is primarily the result of the peaceful policy pursued by the legitimate political representatives of the people of Kosovo, and of the foreign policy of the Albanian Government.

We believe that Kosovo deserves a status that reflects the political will of its people as well as the international instruments relating to the right of peoples to self-determination. The agreement on education in Kosovo, recently reached by representatives of Kosovo and Belgrade, is a promising step towards further efforts fully to guarantee the Kosovo Albanians basic freedoms and human and national rights. The Government of the Republic of Albania believes that through constructive dialogue, in the presence of a credible international third party, a solution to this acute problem can be found.

We thank the General Assembly for its consideration of the situation in Kosovo, particularly through its resolutions 49/204 of 23 December 1994 and 50/190 of 22 December 1995. We would like to take this opportunity to appeal once again to the international community to continue its efforts until this issue is definitively resolved.

Albania's foreign policy is characterized by efforts to establish good relations with its neighbours. Albania has always been in favour of peace, stability, and economic and cultural cooperation with its neighbouring countries. Albania and Greece have been able to establish good relations, which are expanding and strengthening. The Government of the Republic of Albania and the Albanian people are grateful to the Government and the people of Greece for having supported us during our difficult period of transition. The current positive developments in Albanian-Greek relations show, to our great pleasure, that in bilateral relations all problems can be solved satisfactorily and within a reasonable time-frame if there is political good will and a serious commitment by both sides. The friendly relations between our two countries are concrete testimony of the achievements of both the Greek and the Albanian Governments. Good relations between two neighbouring countries such as Albania and Greece show that the existence of national minorities in neighbouring countries can serve as a bridge of friendship and become a connective link between countries. The recognition and equal treatment of national minorities, coupled with respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State, are essential elements in such relations.

The Albanian Government has taken steps to show its interest in establishing mutually beneficial relations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Albania was among the first countries to officially recognize that State, while at the same time assuring it of our readiness to work with it to establish stronger relations in all fields, independently of the problems relating to the situation and the position of those Albanians living in that State. My country believes that the normalization and improvement of relations with Serbia and Montenegro depends on Belgrade taking certain steps, such as respecting the Dayton Agreement, taking concrete measures to put an end to the violence against and the suppression of the rights of the Albanians in Kosovo, and making a serious commitment to a peaceful solution to the Kosovo question.

Albania attaches particular importance to its relations with its western neighbour, Italy. This ancient relationship has lasted as long as our peoples have lived in the Mediterranean. In the framework of the European Union, Italy has been one of the main donors to Albania. We are very grateful to the Italian Government and people for the tremendous assistance they have given our country during this difficult period of transition, and for the spirit of good will that has always prevailed in our relations. We believe these things provide a solid basis for further positive developments in the future.

Before concluding my address before the Assembly, allow me to assure members, on behalf of the Albanian Government, of our continued support for the activities of the United Nations. We will continue to contribute to the strengthening of the Organization and of its irreplaceable role in the service of peace, security, progress and democracy throughout the world. My small

country, Albania, will always be committed to contribute actively to all the work of the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Her Excellency Ms. Tansu Çiller.

Ms. Çiller (Turkey): I should like to congratulate warmly Mr. Razali on his election to the high office of President of the General Assembly. I am confident that under his wise and able guidance our deliberations will be most successful. I should also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Do Amaral for his most valuable contribution to the work of the previous session of the General Assembly.

We have just left behind 50 years in the life of this universal Organization, which was founded with the ideal of serving and guiding humankind in its common quest to make the world a better place to live. The commemoration last year of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations marked an important milestone in our journey. Yet we find that our common pursuit of a new and more promising order of international relations is far from its goal. The new expectations and hopes that the end of the cold-war era instilled in us all have, unfortunately, been short-lived. Indeed, such dark forces as extreme ethnic nationalism, aggression, hegemonistic tendencies, intolerance, racism, xenophobia and terrorism have been unleashed to wreak havoc on a global scale. At the same time, economic, social and environmental problems, as well as risks in the military security realm, have assumed global proportions.

No country can claim to be immune from any of the problems we are facing today, which need common solutions. In fact, there is an emerging consensus that more than ever, our common problems require global solutions, which must be formulated in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation. This spirit can find concrete expression only within this Organization, which continues to be the only global forum for collective cooperation and effective international action. Therefore, it is our duty to generations to come to refashion this institution so as to further strengthen it and equip it with the means to meet the challenge of the new era that begins with the twenty-first century.

As we embark on the second half-century of our Organization, it is high time that the international community reassess the ways and means by which it can give a new impetus to the efforts aimed at building a better and more secure future for all humankind. Substantial work to this end has already been carried out within the United Nations system. In particular, the series of major conferences on basic issues of common concern laid the groundwork for future action. The chain of these conferences, which began with the 1990 World Summit for Children and ended with the Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul this past June, has covered virtually every aspect of human interest. The declarations and programmes of action they adopted will serve as our road map in our efforts to achieve their final objectives.

It was a distinct privilege for Turkey to host, in Istanbul this year, the last major international conference of the century, Habitat II. That conference played an instrumental role in creating a greater awareness that adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements in a rapidly urbanizing and globalizing world are the common challenges before us. The Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda will be our guiding instruments to meet these challenges. We attach great importance to the follow-up of that successful conference.

Although criticized at times for its limitations, the United Nations has nevertheless played a crucial role in the search for global solutions to the problems encountered in every field of human endeavour. Yet the challenges that it will face in the twenty-first century will probably be far greater and more formidable than ever before, and the United Nations, therefore, has to promptly adapt to changing times. For this reason, we support the ongoing reform process within the United Nations. In this respect, streamlining, rationalizing, revitalizing and restructuring the United Nations system and its work are the widely accepted components needed to bring about a more effective, responsive, representative, democratic and accountable world Organization. These modifications, which are currently under intense consideration at various levels, will, to a large extent, determine the effectiveness of the United Nations in the years to come.

Since January 1994, the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters has been formulating a set of guidelines for the ongoing reform process. The general issue before us here is the enhancement of the representative character of the Security Council and the democratization of its method of work. Strongly in favour of a comprehensive reform, Turkey last year formally introduced a proposal for the enlargement of the Security Council. As the representative character of the Council has, despite minor

adjustments, eroded steadily, we believe that a Council with at least 25 members would be more representative and thus more effective. We hold the view that the Council should be enlarged by 10 additional non-permanent members and that the proposed new additional seats should rotate among a predetermined list of about 30 to 40 countries. These countries should be selected within the geographical groups according to a set of objective criteria that can be modified, of course, in time. The list would consequently be flexible and updated after a certain period of time to conform to arising new conditions.

As regards to its working methods and procedures, the Council has already taken some important steps. There is, however, a widespread belief that these steps fall short of the legitimate expectations of the great majority of the Member States. Hence, more work needs to be done in this sphere, especially on questions on which important differences still exist.

On the other hand, the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System is in the process of formulating recommendations for reform, with the General Assembly and the Secretariat as its main areas of interest. Turkey favours the continuation of the mandate of the Working Group to enable it to complete its work.

The challenges and risks we face in the military security field call for measures that are broad in scope and application. This feature alone underscores the unique mandate and authority of the United Nations to address these challenges in their global dimensions. Arms control and disarmament — focusing distinctly and with a sense of urgency on measures and regimes destined to curb the alarming trends in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and in the technologies for their means of delivery — must remain high on our agenda.

Turkey, as a Member State of the Conference on Disarmament, is pleased to have joined the overwhelming majority of nations in the efforts to conclude and adopt the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The Treaty, which I signed on 24 September, constitutes an indispensable step towards the eventual goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Accumulation of conventional weapons beyond legitimate defense needs is inherently destabilizing. Devising responsible policies to be globally adhered to in arms transfers, with due regard to the impact of such transfers on regional and international stability, is not a lesser priority. We must ensure that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms becomes a more effective tool for monitoring and for transparency in transfers. On a parallel track, the international community must vigorously pursue a more concerted effort to eradicate illicit arms trafficking, not solely as an arms and export-control measure, but more importantly as a key component in the international fight against terrorism.

One of the most daunting tasks before the United Nations is to foster greater international solidarity and concerted action against terrorism. We should not shy away from the responsibility to meet this challenge head-on, because terrorism not only poses a threat to international peace and stability, but also violates the most fundamental human right of all: the very right to live. International cooperation is imperative if we choose to live free of fear. The United Nations has to play a central role in this respect. General Assembly resolutions on human rights and terrorism and a Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism are significant milestones, paving the way for effective international cooperation to eradicate this common enemy. In combating terrorism, we should not lose sight of the fact that what is equally important is to fight against, and not to condone, the countries that are behind it. Transnational organized crime, with its connections to drug trafficking and terrorist organizations, also poses a serious threat to the stability of our societies. We will continue to vigorously support international cooperation to combat this evil.

In 1995, we also celebrated the United Nations Year for Tolerance. A culture of tolerance — which is vital for consolidating democracy and preventing ethnic conflicts, racist tendencies and xenophobia — has been promoted through various international and regional activities under the umbrella of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Current developments unmistakably demonstrate how crucial it is to keep this precious concept alive within society and in bilateral, regional and international relations. We attach great importance to the follow-up of the Year and will present a draft resolution under the relevant agenda item of the General Assembly.

Located on the fault line of several regions fraught with conflicts and instability, Turkey naturally is seriously concerned by developments on its periphery that threaten regional and international peace and security. We have been playing a crucial role in the efforts to find lasting and just solutions to the current problems. We are

also actively taking part in various United Nations initiatives, including peacekeeping operations and preventive diplomacy activities.

Turning to one of the questions that is high on our agenda, our fundamental policy towards Iraq continues to be our commitment to the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of that country. The full compliance by Iraq with all of its obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions remains vital for the return to normalcy in the region. Our main objective here is the restoration of peace, stability and security on our borders, as well as in the region as a whole. We are closely following the recent developments in northern Iraq, which may further aggravate the already delicate situation in the region. To bring durable calm to the area, all segments of the local population — Kurds, Turkomans in particular, since they have not been mentioned up to this point to the extent that they deserve; Arabs; Assyrians; and others — should fully participate in any local administrative arrangement, and their rights should be guaranteed. Northern Iraq should not be permitted to serve as an area that poses a threat to the security of the neighbouring countries. Turkey will not tolerate terrorist elements using northern Iraq to stage terrorist acts against its territory. We are determined to take all necessary measures to protect our legitimate security interests and to deny terrorist elements the possibility of launching terrorist operations against our population from northern Iraq.

We have fulfilled our responsibilities emanating from the sanctions regime against Iraq, despite the extreme economic burden this has entailed for our country. More than six years after the sanctions' inception, Turkey is now at the forefront of the countries that have been directly and most adversely affected by the sanctions regime. In fact, the heavy toll we have been required to pay has long exceeded our ability to sustain the financial strain on our economy, nor can we pay it any longer. Security Council resolution 986 (1995), when implemented, will alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people while also bringing limited relief for Turkey. However, this relief can in no way be commensurate with our losses. Consequently, we have applied to the United Nations Sanctions Committee with a view to obtaining further appropriate compensation within the framework of the sanctions regime. In this context, I wish to reiterate that we attach great importance to the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995) as soon as possible.

In the wider context of the Middle East, we are concerned about what we hope will be only a temporary impasse in the Middle East peace process. As a devoted supporter of the peace process, which we regard as the only viable alternative for the region, we desire to see it pick up its momentum. This indisputably requires the parties to live up to their commitments.

As we underlined in our statement before the Security Council on 27 September, any action that may adversely affect the peace process should be avoided. The Israeli decision to open an entrance to a tunnel in the vicinity of the Mosque and the chain of reactions it provoked are of that nature. We are deeply saddened by the high number of casualties. We call on both sides to exercise utmost restraint and to prevent further violence. We urge the Israeli Government to review its decision and to refrain from any action that can be construed as provocation and from resorting to the use of force. We welcome Security Council resolution 1073 (1996). We expect President Arafat and Prime Minister Netanyahu to meet immediately to find a way out of this crisis.

One of the main obstacles blocking the path to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East continues to be terrorism. It must be eliminated if the quest for a lasting peace and stability is to prevail. We advocate and stand ready to take part in enhanced cooperation on the bilateral, regional and international levels. Similarly, we expect all countries to do their share to this very end. It is with this understanding that we participated in the summit of Sharm el-Sheikh, convened to demonstrate the resolve of the international community to fight against terrorism on a united front. The eventual success of the peace process will also hinge on our collective ability to promote mutually beneficial economic cooperation and interdependence among the countries of the Middle East.

As a Balkan country, we firmly believe that peace, justice and legitimacy in the Balkans remain vital for international peace and stability. We hold the view that any cooperative scheme in the Balkans should include all and exclude none. We were profoundly distressed for a long time that, during the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, lack of resolute international intervention at the very outset of the aggression and war led to bloodshed and atrocities unparalleled in recent history. The developments that took place prior to the Dayton peace Agreement proved once again that turning a blind eye to aggression only further aggravates crisis situations, causing untold human suffering and making it all the more difficult to find solutions.

We are actively participating in the implementation of both the military and civilian aspects of the Dayton peace Agreement, and in the international efforts to reconstruct and rehabilitate Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are also conducting, together with the United States, a joint programme to train and equip the army of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to provide the Federation with the means to preserve its territorial integrity and to ensure military parity.

We welcome the recently held elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We consider the realization of these elections, despite existing hardships, an important development for Bosnia and Herzegovina's future. We hope that this development will lead to the creation of a positive political climate conducive to the attainment of lasting peace and stability and to the establishment of the constitutional, legislative, administrative and security structures of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We urge the international community to remain committed to the cause of Bosnia and Herzegovina; to remain vigilant as regards any ill intention against the independence and territorial integrity of that country; to ensure the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes; to seek the arrest and extradition to The Hague of indicted war criminals; to prevent any negative outside interference that could potentially impede the process of peaceful and democratic reintegration; and to make available the assistance pledged for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Bosnia.

Turkey enjoys good-neighbourly relations with the Balkan countries. However, a number of issues between Turkey and Greece, mostly related to the Aegean, remain unresolved. We have always advocated that disputes should be settled by peaceful means and through dialogue and constructive negotiations. Consequently, we have made several appeals to Greece to seek an overall solution to all the existing issues that stand between us. However, this does not mean that we would accept any *fait accompli*. We still expect Greece to give these appeals the full consideration and positive response they deserve. We would like to hope that the new Greek Government, emerging from the recent elections, will adopt a more forthcoming stance in this regard. Unfortunately, the recent statement of the Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs, from this very rostrum on 27 September, does not bode well. Distortion and misrepresentation of the established facts, as well as unfounded and unjustified allegations, will not serve the creation of the climate of confidence and friendship we wish to see in our bilateral relations.

In Cyprus, in the period that has elapsed since the last session of the General Assembly, regrettably no noticeable developments have taken place towards a comprehensive settlement. It has not been possible to resume the direct talks between the two sides under the mission of good offices of the United Nations Secretary-General, due to the negative stance of the Greek Cypriots. The Greek Cypriot side continues not to acknowledge that, in the past, the United Nations negotiating process and direct dialogue between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders not only served to establish the key parameters of a final settlement — which are already on the table — but also played an important role in defusing tensions between the two communities. It is all too evident that attempts to derail the United Nations negotiating process can only further complicate the already difficult road to a just solution.

The recent regrettable events in and around the buffer zone and, especially the slaying of a Turkish Cypriot soldier, have proven once again what the lack of dialogue as well as inflammatory rhetoric and provocation can lead to. I hope that the Greek Cypriot side will not fail this time to draw the necessary conclusions. It is evident that the need to reduce tensions and build up confidence on the island makes the resumption of the direct talks, without any precondition, all the more urgent. The Turkish Cypriot side has already made public its readiness to this end. Turkey is committed to supporting the renewed efforts of the United Nations and expects the same constructive approach from Greece and the Greek Cypriot side.

Peace and legitimacy are yet to be restored in another area of conflagration: the Caucasus. Indeed, this region continues to be wracked by various conflicts, that cause immense human anguish and threaten peace, security and stability. Turkey has close bonds with the countries of the region and attaches utmost importance to the preservation of regional peace and stability. The ongoing occupation of more than one fifth of the territory of Azerbaijan by Armenian forces continues to be a source of grave concern for Turkey. More than one million Azeris are still displaced in their own country and living in unacceptable conditions.

They should not be permitted to endure another bitter winter in such conditions. Turkey has been striving to help bring about a peaceful and just settlement of the dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. We will continue to contribute to the efforts of the Minsk Group

of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe with a view to establishing peace, security and stability in the region. We earnestly believe that all countries in the region have much to gain from the restoration of peace and legitimacy in the Caucasus. The attainment of a just peace will pave the way for a climate of cooperation to serve the common prosperity of all the countries of the region.

The conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, also continues to be a source of distress. We attach the utmost importance to the preservation of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and unity of Georgia and firmly believe that the international community should deploy all efforts to bring about a just solution to the conflict on that basis. To this end, we fully support the United Nations-sponsored peace talks between the parties and stand ready to contribute to those efforts.

One of the important aspects of the economic development of the Caucasus and Central Asia is the exportation of their natural resources, for which Turkey is in a position to provide easy access to world markets. I can mention here Turkey's proposed Baku-Ceyhan oil-pipeline project and natural-gas pipeline projects, which will serve the common interests and welfare of the entire region.

Afghanistan is yet another conflict area where the international community has been unable to help bring about a just and lasting solution. Our close ties with that country are deeply rooted in history and we are troubled by the tragic consequences of the ongoing conflict. We are all too aware of the possibility of a spillover effect of the conflict in the region. We believe that this terrible conflict may be brought to an end and peace restored through direct negotiations between the fighting groups and the formation of a broad-based Government with the participation of all parties. Turkey is anxious to see, as soon as possible, the signing of a ceasefire agreement and the beginning of peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. We will be pleased to host a meeting for such negotiations and will continue to support fully the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to mediate a settlement respecting the territorial integrity, sovereignty and unity of Afghanistan.

As an extension of its geography and against the backdrop of its history, Turkey finds itself at the multidirectional crossroads of several continents and different cultures. It acts as an important bridge between East and West, combining the values of the East with the ideals and institutions of the West in a unique synthesis. Strong historical, cultural and fraternal ties exist between Turkey and the countries of the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. We spare no effort in contributing to the resolution of conflicts and preventing new ones from erupting, strengthening regional and international cooperation and promoting tolerance and dialogue. This is the very core and essence of the basic principles that define our foreign policy. We shall continue to place our assets at the disposal and service of regional and global peace, stability and prosperity.

In this context, I wish to underline the eminent role played by Turkey in such regional cooperation schemes as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Economic Cooperation Organization, as well as its active participation in cooperation in the Mediterranean basin.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate our sincere desire to see the fifty-first session of the General Assembly become an important milestone on the road to the third millennium. We have to gather our strength, pool our resources and ignite our imagination to build, collectively, a better world. National interests and objectives will surely remain at the core of our policies. However, on the eve of a new millennium, the time has certainly come to take a broader view and to replace rivalry with cooperation, intolerance with tolerance and confrontation with dialogue and conciliation. We should at all costs avoid *faits accomplis* and double standards in international relations. A revitalized and reinvigorated United Nations entering its second half-century can make a significant contribution to assisting us all to attain our highest goals and aspirations. Let us not forget, however, that the task of shaping a better future is entirely in our hands, for we are the United Nations.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, the Honourable Alexander Downer.

Mr. Downer (Australia): I should like to extend warm congratulations to Mr. Razali on his election as President of the General Assembly. As a close neighbour of Malaysia, Australia will confidently rely on his experience and sound judgement as he presides over this important session of the Assembly.

I feel greatly honoured to be leading for the first time the Australian delegation to a session of the General Assembly.

A year ago, when the Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, it made an important promise: to

give to the twenty-first century a United Nations that would serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established. We must keep that promise, but to do so we will need a clear view of contemporary circumstances and of those which we can see unfolding into the twenty-first century.

The landscape that was revealed at the end of the cold war, just a little over five years ago, has many new features, some of which are still not clear. What is clear, however, is that we face new challenges and that we have new opportunities that few of us would have imagined five years ago.

The most compelling of these opportunities is to take future steps in nuclear-arms control and disarmament. The possibility of taking such steps is surely a principal outcome of the end of the cold war. This was firmly underlined last Tuesday when, in a single day, 67 countries signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. That number, only a week later, is now nearly 100. But beyond this achievement lies another major opportunity, which is to turn our national and international attention to enhancing human security in all its aspects.

Our dynamic times have presented us with new problems. Such problems include the major non-military threats to security: the clandestine arms trade, the narcotics trade, HIV/AIDS, the need to stabilize the rate of growth of the world's population and major threats to the environment.

The elemental characteristics of such non-military threats to security are that they cannot be defeated by weapons. They cross state boundaries and they can affect whole populations. These characteristics lead to one central conclusion, that is, action on these problems must be the subject of international cooperation.

Multilateral cooperation can, does and must take many forms. But the role of the United Nations is unique because of its universality and because of the rules we find in the Charter of the United Nations.

It is for these reasons — the nature of the opportunities we have before us, the problems we face and the unique role and capability of the United Nations — that we must keep last year's promise of a United Nations fit for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Australia's particular commitment to the United Nations is founded on the belief, articulated as far back as the 1950s by the then Foreign Minister, Richard Casey, that the United Nations represents the practical effort of the Governments and peoples of the world to attain the high goals to which they are pledged through the United Nations Charter: international peace and security and the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

Australia has contributed readily to achieving those goals. Whether by paying its financial contributions in full and on time, by providing personnel to peacekeeping operations or through its contributions to development programmes, Australia has been determined to see the United Nations succeed. I commit Australia today to continuing such involvement in the work of the United Nations.

At present, a window of opportunity in arms control and disarmament is open to us. If we do not take it soon, it will close. Large and sophisticated nuclear and conventional arsenals continue to exist. In a number of regions, suspicions remain close to the surface. The risks of the spread of weapons of mass destruction have, in certain respects, increased.

In Australia's view, two tasks are fundamental: first, building and strengthening international institutions and instruments; and secondly, developing new thinking in arms control and disarmament so as to push the international agenda forward in constructive and realistic ways.

To achieve progress with institutions and instruments, Members of the United Nations need to work together on at least six priorities. These priorities for international cooperation are to make the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its enhanced review process operate more effectively; to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards; to achieve an early start for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; to reach early agreement on effective verification machinery for the Biological Weapons Convention; to pursue the goal of a global ban on anti-personnel landmines in conjunction with a global approach to the problem of demining; and to achieve a ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

As we pursue these priorities in the multilateral system, we should keep firmly in mind that progress in regional security, particularly in regions of weapons-proliferation concern, will make a crucial contribution.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is of course the immediate priority. Its adoption by the General Assembly and its opening for signature on 24 September were major milestones for the international community. The Treaty is a product of our times. It flows from a long and commonly held global concern. Its death was something the international community simply could not allow.

Australia was therefore prepared to take the lead in bringing the Treaty to the General Assembly. The overwhelming support for the resolution demonstrated the strength of international feeling against nuclear testing. This Treaty was wanted and needed, but it has also helped change the international climate. We can now reasonably hope and expect that nuclear testing will not be part of the future to be faced by succeeding generations. In a world with a mixed history on controlling the development and spread of destructive weaponry, that is something of which we can all be proud.

The Treaty must become universal. We urge all those countries that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible so that it can be fully implemented as quickly as possible. There is no merit in the argument that says that, because there is more to be done in nuclear-arms control and disarmament, we should in some way scorn or reject a Treaty that bans all nuclear explosions forever. This ban has intrinsic value. We must now keep up the positive momentum generated by the adoption of the Treaty.

This brings me to the second task: developing new ideas. Because building institutions and strengthening international instruments will not be enough, the international community must also develop imaginative new ways of guiding the world into the next century.

The Australian Government established the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons to address the questions of whether a nuclear-weapon-free world is feasible and, if so, the measures which could be taken to attain that objective. I am delighted to confirm that the Commission has more than met Australia's expectations. Its report will make a major contribution to international thinking and discussion on nuclear disarmament. The Australian Government will take it forward by circulating it today in this Hall, will present it to the Secretary-General tomorrow and introduce it to the Conference on Disarmament in January.

The Canberra Commission report recommends a political commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to the elimination of nuclear weapons. That is the first and central requirement. The report then sets out six immediate steps: taking nuclear forces off alert; removal of warheads from delivery vehicles; ending the deployment of non-strategic nuclear weapons; ending nuclear testing; initiating negotiations further to reduce United States and Russian nuclear arsenals; and an agreement among the nuclear-weapon States on reciprocal no-first-use undertakings and of a non-use undertaking by them in relation to the non-nuclear-weapon States.

The Commission also recommends three reinforcing steps: action to prevent further horizontal proliferation; developing verification arrangements for a nuclear-weapon-free world; and the cessation of the production of fissile material for nuclear-explosive purposes. The Commission placed particular emphasis on the importance of effective verification in the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear-weapons-free world.

Having at last, after 33 years, met the challenge of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the international community must now push on with further practical and realistic measures on nuclear-arms control and disarmament.

As already indicated, one such measure is the negotiation of a convention under which it would be agreed that there will be no further manufacturing of weapons-grade fissile material. This convention should be sought now.

Any discussion of arms control and disarmament in today's world that failed to address the question of landmines would be sadly incomplete. These hideous and diabolically inexpensive weapons must be banned. Australia will support efforts that will be made at this session of the Assembly to take the next step towards the negotiation of an international convention to that effect.

But in the meantime, there are in excess of 100 million of these maiming weapons distributed in the soil of too many countries. Demining must proceed at a far faster rate than has been the case in the past. There have been technological barriers to increasing that rate and Australia has therefore proposed that a technology working group be established among interested and capable countries with the purpose of designing the equipment required for demining on a far larger and quicker scale.

If there is any doubt about the need for this action, I would place on record here that, if the current rate of demining in Cambodia were to be maintained, that country, which has struggled so hard to repair itself, would not be free of these mines for a further 130 years. This must be unacceptable to all. That is why the Australian Government recently committed $12 million to practical demining initiatives in the war-ravaged fields within our own region.

Security Council reform is another vitally important item on the peace-and-security agenda. The three key issues to be tackled are expansion, transparency and the effectiveness of sanctions regimes.

There is now a general acceptance that the Security Council must be expanded and modernized if it is to manage international peace and security more effectively. Although Australia wants to avoid making the Council too unwieldy, there can be little doubt that its membership needs to reflect better current geopolitical and economic circumstances. Expanding the membership is an important element in achieving this and Australia believes that an expansion up to a total Council membership of 25 States would be reasonable.

This brings me to the more contentious point of permanent as against non-permanent membership. Australia has made clear that it supports the claims of Japan and Germany to permanent membership. This is the very least the United Nations can do to acknowledge their major-Power status and the financial contribution they are making to the Organization.

Australia also advocates permanent seats on the Council for underrepresented regions. As to how that is to be achieved, we remain flexible. Whether those seats are filled by a single member or rotate among leading Member States agreed on by regional groupings needs to be discussed further, primarily by those regions concerned. We also see scope for an increase in the number of non-permanent members of the Council, again in the interests of ensuring greater balance in representation.

I turn now to the need for greater transparency in Security Council processes. Consultative mechanisms have improved in recent times, notably between the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries, but more needs to be done. Australia is committed to trying to improve the way in which the Security Council interacts with non-members so that the Council's activities become more responsive to the United Nations as a whole.

More needs to be done, too, to build the Council's relationship with regional organizations. Good progress has been recorded to date, but United Nations and regional organizations should meet regularly in order to develop further the appropriate division of responsibilities.

The Council also has an important role to play in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and enhancing the effectiveness of the non-proliferation regime.

Australia wants to see improvements in the effectiveness of United Nations sanctions because we recognize that the Security Council's use of collective sanctions continues to be an important and, at times, contentious enforcement measure. The effectiveness of sanctions regimes could be improved in three ways: clearer drafting of Security Council resolutions; providing specific objectives and realistic time-frames; and through relevant sanctions committees providing clear interpretative guidance on implementation. These are changes that are essential for the Security Council's dynamism. We need to press ahead with them to ensure that the Council reflects modern-day circumstances and realities.

Our contemporary circumstances have opened up new needs and prospects for peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy. Initial post-cold-war hopes about the capabilities of the Security Council have been tempered. It has become clear that many conflicts are intractable. Experience has taught us that it is difficult to reach agreement on suitable approaches and to find enough resources, particularly in the area of peacekeeping.

The Security Council must be realistic in the implementation of its Charter responsibilities. It must resist pressure to embark on missions before it has completed adequate preparations, developed a focused sense of the mission's goals and agreed on a clearly articulated mandate.

At this very moment, the United Nations is confronted with major challenges in such diverse situations as those in Cyprus, Burundi and Liberia. Australia has been contributing personnel to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, for example, for over 20 years and has been saddened by the recent incidents of violence there. The time has come to resolve that situation, which requires the assistance of all parties.

One very important area of reform for United Nations peacekeeping is to establish an enhanced rapid-reaction capability. There have been many proposals on this issue, but the Australian Government believes that the Canadian study, *Towards a Rapid Reaction Capability for the United Nations*, contains some commendable recommendations, including the development of a deployable, operational-level headquarters to strengthen planning for operations.

Australia welcomes recent moves by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to begin implementing measures aimed at improving United Nations rapid-reaction capability, but in taking these measures forward, the United Nations should consult adequately with all Member States.

Australia is also keen to see the United Nations develop the preventive-diplomacy agenda and it welcomes the greater resources the Secretariat now devotes to such activity. The Security Council, the General Assembly and the good offices of the Secretary-General, as well as regional arrangements and agencies, have important roles to play in preventive diplomacy. Australia supports greater use of Chapter VI of the Charter on the pacific settlement of disputes. Article 33 is particularly important. The Security Council can use it to undertake a leadership role by calling on disputing parties to seek a solution using negotiation, mediation and other peaceful means.

As I indicated at the beginning of this statement, one of the chief results of the end of the cold war must surely be an increase in our ability to turn away from military concerns and to give a greater degree of attention to threats to the security of individuals, as distinct from those threats to the security of States that have dominated our thinking in the past, important and basic though they have been and remain.

In today's world and in the world we see unfolding into the twenty-first century, the security of far too many people is threatened in ways no less immediate than the threat of the gun. I have in mind narcotics, HIV/AIDS and major threats to the environment. These threats cannot be dealt with effectively by States acting alone. Sometimes they require new international law, but more specifically they require political will to defeat them and to foster cooperation among nations to ensure maximum effectiveness of action.

The United Nations is the ideal environment in which to develop such cooperation. It is here that the world is represented. We have here a tradition of debate, of discussion, of identification of problems and of consensus. We have the ability to make law when it is necessary. Above all, we have pledged ourselves to defending and providing a decent standard of living to the peoples we represent.

There is also a regional role and, in that context, Australia was pleased to have promoted the concept of a regional HIV/AIDS ministers' meeting at the Post-Ministerial Conference of this year's session of the Association of South-East Asian Nations.

As we move towards the twenty-first century, it will be crucial to the execution of that responsibility to ensure that we have a healthy United Nations that is devoted to international cooperation aimed at defeating the major non-military threats to the security of the human family. These threats are tragically evident to us today. They will only become larger if we do not agree, now, to begin cooperative action to defeat them. History will surely judge our generation harshly if, having identified the problems of human security, we fail for lack of will to address their solutions.

Another great requirement of our times is the economic needs of people and the promotion of development. Much has been done through the United Nations and its agencies to advance the development cause. They have been pivotal to the emergence of a multilateral approach in which institutions with special competencies such as the specialized agencies, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, together with policy deliberative bodies such as the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, have complementary roles to play.

Development is about more than just economic growth, however. There is also the need for internal stability, sound environmental management, a vigorous civil society and a lively democracy. The United Nations is uniquely placed to build consensus on how to advance these various elements of the development agenda.

In this context, Australia welcomes the constructive outcomes achieved at the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) held in Midrand, South Africa, earlier this year. The decisions taken there should help developing countries benefit from the opportunities of economic globalization.

We also underline the importance of encouraging investment and technology transfers and providing trade opportunities to stimulate economic development. Such development is the only enduring foundation for independence and economic and social well-being.

It is in Africa that these development challenges are most stark. Rich in promise yet wearied by emergencies, Africa stands today at a decisive juncture in its history.

African leaders seized the moment with the Organization of African Unity's 1995 Cairo Agenda for Action, in which they called for immediate action to implement the development strategies for which an international consensus now exists. The United Nations responded this year with the launch of a 10-year, $25 billion United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa.

The Australian Government welcomes the Special Initiative as a concrete demonstration of the international community's concern with Africa. The international community cannot allow disease, poverty, war and underdevelopment to become entrenched in the 53 nations — almost one-third of United Nations Member States — that make up the African continent.

The world must continue to seek ways to break the poverty cycle in Africa so that its potential for economic development is realized. Sustainable economic development is essential to overcome poverty, disease and conflict.

The United Nations system needs to give greater focus and impetus to the development effort in Africa.

I now turn to the issue of human rights. Human rights are important in international relations for two main reasons: first, political instability and major conflict can result where human rights are breached or are under threat; and secondly, the freedom and dignity of individuals is, in itself, of fundamental value to the world community.

The Australian Government aims for practical outcomes that will improve the lives of individual men, women and children. We recognize the importance of dialogue and cooperation, based on mutual respect. In addition to public and private diplomacy, Australia's approach to the improvement of human rights also encompasses development cooperation.

Australia strongly supports the development of strong and independent national human rights institutions. For example, Australia provided financial support for a workshop of Asia-Pacific national human rights institutions, which agreed to establish an informal forum to work for the strengthening and further development of such institutions in the region. Australia has also provided financial support to the United Nations for the creation of a position of special adviser to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on national human rights institutions.

Finally, it is important to address the issue of reform of the United Nations. Much work still needs to be done to bring about greater efficiency and effectiveness in the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

While Australia applauds the dedication and hard work of the General Assembly Working Groups that were set up in 1995, Member States must not lose sight of the fact that to achieve real change, the Groups have to come up with realistic and achievable recommendations. Those recommendations must in turn lead to practical and measurable outcomes.

It is important that the work of the groups be focused and that their momentum be restored so that early and positive outcomes can be achieved. We must all commit ourselves to this end and to bringing about structured change within the United Nations.

It is also crucial that the financial situation of the United Nations be repaired. Australia believes that all Members should pay their contributions in full and on time. We therefore welcome recent moves by some countries to pay their arrears.

It is time to establish a revised scale of assessed contributions that more fairly reflects what Governments can pay. The current minimum payment is too high for many small-economy countries, and Australia would like to see it reduced or even removed.

These are the reforms that Australia believes are necessary to equip the United Nations for its role in the twenty-first century.

It is in this overall context that Australia is deeply committed to contributing to the United Nations goal of maintaining international peace and security in an active way. Serving a term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council during 1997-1998 would enable Australia to make a substantive contribution to that goal

and to work for a more effective, modernized and transparent Council. That is why we have asked for the support of Member States at the elections to be held a few weeks from now.

Let me conclude by summing up what I have said today. The United Nations is unique and needed, but it must pursue, and work on the basis of, a relevant Agenda. This is the central point. The United Nations must be put to work on the agenda of the twenty-first century.

Much work needs to be done to tackle the key challenges that face the United Nations. Only a sustained, cooperative effort among all Member States will bring success. Australia will make that effort.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, His Excellency Mr. Habib Ben Yahia.

Mr. Ben Yahia (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me first of all to convey to Mr. Razali Ismail my sincere and heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of his election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that thanks to his wise and able leadership and his extensive experience in the field of international relations, the proceedings of our session will be successful.

Malaysia's presidency of the General Assembly is clear testimony to the respect that Mr. Razali's country enjoys within the international community, which appreciates the great and efficient role played by Malaysia at the regional and international levels in order to strengthen and consolidate relations among nations on the basis of peace, justice and cooperation. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the excellent relations of friendship and fruitful cooperation that exist between our two countries.

I should like also to convey my sincere thanks to Mr. Razali's predecessor, Mr. Freitas do Amaral, for his valuable efforts during his presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. I wish to mention in particular his contribution to helping advance the process of reform of the United Nations, in order to make it more efficient in the light of the changes the world is witnessing.

I should like also to pay tribute to Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali and to convey to him our appreciation and support for his continued selfless dedication as head of the Secretariat of the United Nations. My delegation also appreciates his courageous initiatives, especially his Special Initiative for Africa, as well as his constructive proposals within the Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development. Tunisia, which supports the renewal of Mr. Boutros-Ghali's mandate, stresses the importance of continuing the reform process undertaken in recent years.

With the end of the cold war, the international community has entered a new era of international relations that aims to reject the use of force and violence as a means of settling conflicts, and to put an end to the arms race. This trend favours the logic of wisdom and moderation by resorting to peaceful means and preventive diplomacy, which offer possibilities for dialogue, concertation and negotiation to resolve conflicts, disputes and crises, however complex they may be.

We welcome this emerging trend in international relations, which is a consecration of the principles and purposes of the United Nations as enunciated in its Charter. This trend must be strengthened and consolidated in order to eliminate sources of tension and defuse conflicts before they break out.

The international community welcomed with enthusiasm the start of the peace process in the Middle East. This raised hopes of seeing the parties arrive at a true, comprehensive, just and honourable peace, thus putting an end to a cruel conflict that has lasted for almost half a century, during which time the peoples of the region have experienced the horrors of war, destruction, exodus and occupation. This peace settlement should be based on international law and United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and on the principle of the exchange of land for peace.

The Madrid Conference and the ensuing intensive negotiations, which resulted in the Oslo, Washington and Cairo agreements, led us to believe that the new peace process was finally on the right track. However, the agenda of the new Israeli Government has dashed the hopes of the peoples of the region. This agenda has indeed blocked the peace process on all tracks. An increase in Israeli pressures and provocations, which aim ultimately at imposing the policy of the *fait accompli*, has hindered the Palestinian people's progress towards achieving their legitimate right to self-determination and to create their own independent State.

The bloody events triggered by the opening of a tunnel under the Holy Mosque of Al-Aqsa emphasize the

need for decisive international action to bring the Israeli Government to abide by the agreements concluded with the Palestinian Authority and to comply with international law regarding the settlement of the question of Palestine.

Tunisia is concerned by the stagnation of the peace process and its negative effects on building the future of the region on the basis of peace, security, stability and cooperation among its peoples. Tunisia considers that Israel must re-evaluate its present policy and commit itself to respecting the principles of the peace process and to implementing the agreements already signed.

We also call upon the international community, particularly the sponsors of the peace process, to spare no effort in facilitating the resumption of the peace negotiations as soon as possible in order to avoid any risk of failure, which could affect the credibility of this process and lead to the return of confrontation and the escalation of violence, extremism and terrorism. We believe that confidence-building, good faith and a sincere commitment to a peaceful solution are necessary to advance this process. The commitment of all parties to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace is essential to ensuring the security and stability of the States of the region as well as the coexistence of their peoples.

As stated by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on many occasions, Tunisia is committed to following the same approach it has taken since the beginning of the peace process, by establishing a close link between each step towards normalization and the progress achieved by the negotiations on all tracks.

The establishment of peace in the Middle East depends on the maintenance of security and stability in the Gulf region. Tunisia, which is deeply concerned by recent developments in that region, calls upon all parties to show restraint, avoid any escalation and remain committed to international legality and to the implementation of all United Nations resolutions. Tunisia also reiterates its commitment to respect the sovereignty of all States in the region as well as their territorial integrity and inviolability.

We also call for an end to the suffering that the Iraqi people have been experiencing for several years, and we hope that recent developments in the region will not aggravate this situation.

Tunisia believes that the time has come to lift the embargo imposed on the Libyan people in view of the numerous positive initiatives taken by Libya, the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity, all of which aim at reaching a peaceful and just solution and at putting an end to the suffering of the brotherly Libyan people within the framework of international legality.

Devoted to peace and a staunch supporter of just causes, Tunisia reiterates its solidarity with the United Arab Emirates and its full support for that country's endeavour to recover through peaceful means, which include appealing to the International Court of Justice, the islands of Great Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa.

Turning to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tunisia expresses its satisfaction at the return of peace to this country, and hopes that the recent elections will mark the beginning of a new era in which concord, understanding and common action will prevail, thus allowing the establishment of the foundations of the Bosnian State.

We note that today the international community is giving priority to disarmament as the best means of ensuring and consolidating international security. Considerable progress has been made in this regard, especially in the area of controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular chemical and nuclear weapons.

Tunisia welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its opening for signature. We hope that all Member States will adhere to this Treaty, in order to ensure its universal application. The Treaty's conclusion, as well as the anticipated strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention, due to be reviewed soon in order to provide it with a verification mechanism, will no doubt consolidate the progress made thus far in the field of disarmament.

While expressing our appreciation for the declaration of Africa as a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, we hope that our continent will be relieved of all weapons of mass destruction. We also reiterate our call to free the Middle East from all nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

While emphasizing the necessity of introducing efficient measures for ensuring a total ban of weapons of mass destruction, we believe that it is also essential to tackle the issue of conventional weapons, particularly the question of the accumulation and illegal trade in light weapons. This problem is not only serious but is growing

more so every day, since these are the most commonly used weapons in current conflicts and recent terrorist operations.

In addition to its contribution to disarmament efforts, Tunisia has always supported United Nations peacekeeping efforts around the world. From the early 1960s on, it has taken part in United Nations operations in many African countries, Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and elsewhere.

Convinced of the importance of these operations in maintaining international peace and security, Tunisia called on member States of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to create special units within their armed forces for participation when necessary in peacekeeping operations on the African continent.

While welcoming the decision of the United Nations on establishing a system of standby forces to act to intervene rapidly and efficiently in peacekeeping operations, Tunisia solemnly declares its readiness today to participate in that system, thus confirming our commitment to the Organization and to its role in the maintenance of world peace and security.

Intolerance, racism, organized crime, the illegal arms and drug trades, the illegal traffic in human beings, terrorism and extremism in all its forms are all phenomena that have taken on a transnational dimension. The international community should ensure that appropriate solutions are found by means of a global approach based on the definition and implementation of international cooperation strategies in order to contain and eradicate these scourges.

On many occasions and before various international and regional forums, my country has called the international community's attention to the dangers of re-emergent terrorism and extremism, which threaten the stability and security of States as well as the safety of individuals. In this vein, Tunisia called for the conduct of a comprehensive and thorough re-evaluation of the attitudes of all parties to these scourges through the establishment of international rules of conduct with the aim of fighting all illegal activities, particularly those related to terrorism, in order to find efficient and lasting remedies to these problems and to eliminate their deep-rooted causes.

Tunisia notes with satisfaction the increasing awareness of the need for the international community to join efforts in order to fight terrorism. We hope that the United Nations will adopt mandatory measures that would address this phenomenon by criminalizing all terrorist acts. We also hope that all member States will revise and adapt their relevant legislation to these measures.

Tunisia's steadfast efforts to consolidate the foundations of the country's political institutions and the rule of law and to promote and protect human rights in their global dimension flow from a civilized, irreversible choice made in accordance with universal values.

Eager to ensure respect for human dignity and to encourage ongoing development efforts to secure the well-being of all citizens, Tunisia has been able to reconcile, in a balanced manner, economic growth with the preservation of political, economic and social rights, the requisite foundations of democracy.

Tunisia will continue to advance the causes of human rights in the world and to support the United Nations Voluntary Fund for technical assistance in the field of human rights, as well as the Programme of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education.

We are persuaded that the dissemination of the culture of human rights will come to fruition only with the promotion of tolerance, which is an essential civilized value upon which are based all religions and human-rights ideals.

Tunisia placed particular emphasis on tolerance in the reform of its education system, since it is convinced that global change, the progress of civilization and culture, as well as economic and social growth, will be firmly established only when coming generations are well-prepared and when the values of peace, democracy and goodness are complemented by a culture of tolerance.

Economic globalization has opened new perspectives for international cooperation for development. But it has also had a negative impact on the economies of numerous developing countries that have been swept up in it without adequately preparing their economic and social structures.

In the new era, Tunisia has focused on setting up a comprehensive and multidimensional development strategy designed to assist the disadvantaged in society and based on a broadened concept of human rights. Tunisia's policy in this regard was based on a

development approach aimed at providing equal opportunities to all levels of society and ensuring the well-being of all its citizens.

The human dimension for which Tunisia has opted in defining its development policies has led to a deeper spirit of solidarity within the population towards the underprivileged and vulnerable sectors and to granting them the highest priority. In order to achieve these objectives, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali took the initiative of establishing an anti-poverty programme — the National Solidarity Fund — aimed at eradicating pockets of poverty and ensuring harmonious development for all social sectors.

The debt burden in the third world is a very serious problem that cannot be overlooked, since it constitutes the main obstacle to their efforts to achieve a regular development pattern, free from any shortcomings or failure. While we welcome the Group of Seven's economic communiqué on the issue of debt, we also stress the need to take appropriate measures to alleviate the debt burden of middle-income countries.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization should implement the commitments undertaken by the international community in the framework of the major conferences held during the past five years. To this end, they need to mobilize the resources required to fund the programmes adopted by these conferences in the quest for sustainable development.

We welcome the process of reform initiated by the United Nations with the aim of adjusting to the emerging international environment, improving its functions and assuming its responsibilities as the institution best able to maintain peace and security, on the one hand, and to pursue and support efforts on behalf of the economic and social development of the developing countries, on the other.

To this end, it is equally important to continue the process of reform of the Organization with the aim of rationalizing and strengthening its role as the central pillar of international cooperation for achieving objectives and implementing programmes agreed upon by the international community, on the basis of priorities set by Governments seeking to eradicate poverty and to support employment and housing programmes, as well as those that provide basic services in the education and health sectors and offer protection to women, children and the socially underprivileged.

These objectives can be attained only through the use of jointly agreed criteria based on transparency and democracy in international relations, and by rejecting any policy that involves a double standard.

In order to preserve the prestige and credibility of the United Nations, it is necessary to implement the resolutions the Organization adopts and to follow up on the commitments entered into by States.

We would also like to underline the extreme importance we attach to the restructuring of the Security Council, so as to enable this eminent body to play its key role in the maintenance of international peace and security, while taking into consideration the need for an equitable geographical representation based on new geo-political realities. I should like to recall in this respect that Tunisia supports granting Japan and Germany the status of permanent members of the Security Council, owing to the political and economic standing of both countries.

In accordance with the consensus reached at the thirtieth Organization of African Unity summit meeting, held in Tunis, we reaffirm Africa's right to at least two permanent seats on the Security Council that would rotate among all African States.

Tunisia supports any initiative that takes into account these principles, and it expresses its appreciation for the initiatives and ideas presented by some States, in particular friendly neighbouring Italy, in order to achieve a comprehensive vision regarding reform of the Security Council.

Finally, we believe that the success of our Organization depends on the determination of all Member States to act in conformity with the purposes and principles set out in the Charter, as well as on sincere political will, in order to allow our Organization to fulfil the aspirations and hopes of our peoples, who provide it the indispensable support it needs to guarantee its continued vitality, its renewed capacity and its durability.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras, His Excellency Mr. Delmer Urbizo Panting.

Mr. Urbizo (Honduras) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Once again the United Nations General Assembly is meeting to take stock of the global situation and of the role that the Organization plays in that context.

I am confident that the experience, talent and diplomatic skills of our President, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, will play a decisive role in this complex undertaking. I wish him every success in his sensitive work.

I wish also to express my delegation's gratitude for the excellent job done by Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, in the course of the last General Assembly session, which commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of this Organization.

My country has been observing very closely the administrative activities of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his capacity as Secretary-General, and we feel bound to express our recognition of the poise with which he has guided the United Nations during these difficult times for the Organization and for the whole world. His undeniable qualities of statesmanship have averted crises, and his strength of character has succeeded in upholding the ideals on which this Organization is founded. I wish to convey to him, on my own behalf and on behalf of my Government, my sincere respect and admiration.

Honduras reiterates its conviction that international conflicts must be settled by peaceful and diplomatic means. For this reason, we recognize the importance and value of the 1995 Dayton peace agreement, the 1996 Paris agreements and the subsequent international agreements and commitments for which the international community prepared the way. These have led to a cessation of hostilities, the resumption of political talks, international recognition between Belgrade and Zagreb, and the establishment of relations between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In the Americas, Haiti is an example of the results that can be achieved through concerted action and political will on the part of the international community in establishing, through the United Nations, operations designed to achieve, maintain and consolidate peace. My country wishes to express its satisfaction at having taken part in those operations, as well as in those carried out in Western Sahara.

In the same vein, we cannot overlook the problems of the subregion. Honduras has always viewed with concern the problems besetting its sister republics in Central America. For this reason, we acknowledge and support all efforts in this regard, in particular the agreements reached between the Government of Guatemala and the URNG.

At the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, my country secured unanimous support in this body to occupy a seat in the Security Council as a non-permanent member. We believe that we have fully lived up to the trust vested in us, since we have worked in the Council in strict adherence to the principles and norms of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter and in keeping with the foreign policy pursued by the President of the Republic, Mr. Carlos Roberto Reina.

Throughout our first term of presidency of the Council, in July last year, we succeeded in maintaining the necessary equanimity and balance to steer the work and the debates on the various issues brought before the presidency of the Council. These included humanitarian operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda and Burundi, as well as peace operations in Haiti, Angola and Liberia.

Tomorrow we will assume the presidency of the Security Council for the second time, and we shall work in the same spirit of cooperation and with genuine resolve to help bring about solutions to problems that arise in the area of international peace and security.

Central America has now returned to the world scene with a new, integrational approach that promotes joint action and allows it to speed up its development process. Our approach, grounded in history, tradition, solidarity and, above all, our awareness of a shared destiny, has made it possible for us to pool our efforts in seeking to achieve a higher level of economic development in all areas.

In the framework of the integration process in our subregion, since 1986 we have held a series of presidential summits, the first six of which were highly political in nature, fulfilling the purpose of securing peace and democratization in the region. The following ones, focusing on economic topics, led to the formation of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and defined our current agenda: alliance for sustainable development.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank this Assembly for the support it gave our System last year by granting it the status of observer, which will make it possible to achieve greater cooperation between the United Nations System and the Central American Integration System.

As we stand on the threshold of a new millennium, my Government is strongly committed to the responsibilities imposed by the world around us. In this respect, Honduras is in favour of greater democratization of the principal organs of the United Nations. We take the view that an increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent Members of the Security Council should be carried out in accordance with the principles of sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution, and that it should reflect the expansion in the membership of the United Nations in recent decades so as to transform the Security Council into a more democratic and representative organ, that would thus be a more credible and effective instrument in fulfilling its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security without affecting its efficiency or the speed of its decision-making processes. Genuine democratization and real representativity in the Security Council should be the principal basis for the expansion of twenty-first-century world government.

We would all like to see a more competent, responsive and responsible United Nations. We should all like it to be better administered and more consolidated and to yield tangible results. To this end, it is essential to undertake meaningful reform in order to enhance its efficiency and to ensure that the United Nations can have a secure financial footing, robust administration and structural capacity, and a clear sense of purpose in tackling its tasks.

The General Assembly should play the role now played by costly world conferences, and it should be the forum for sustained thematic debates on important and topical issues held at regular intervals. At the same time, the traditional agenda of the Assembly should be cut back radically. Recurring items should be considered less frequently. We should impose a time limit on our statements, and we need to reform the structure of the committees and auxiliary bodies so as to avoid overlapping and duplication.

My country, Honduras, is continuing to work vigorously to strengthen, among other things, its democratic system of government, to bolster judicial power, to organize the national police under civilian rule, to modernize the State, in addition to striving to create a new frame of reference to promote development on the basis of full participation by all sectors of society.

Honduras, like all other developing countries, is deeply committed to processes designed to combat poverty and underdevelopment and to mobilize the potential of its peoples and resources in order to attain speedy, fair and sustained growth, working jointly to enhance the effect of national efforts through solidarity, cooperation and mutual confidence.

However, there are still many economic and financial obligations that need to be met in the short- and medium-term. International cooperation is steadily declining, and poverty indicators are becoming worse.

We wish to see a world where countries, mindful of their diversity, act together to attain common goals, a world in which peace, security and dignity will be the common heritage of all peoples, a world in which the advances of science will serve to benefit humankind and, in short, a world in which existing resources are used rationally in order to meet everyone's needs. This is our understanding of what, in essence, North-South cooperation should mean.

As the United Nations enters its second half-century, we have an opportunity to work towards the objective of its Charter — world cooperation in deterring and halting aggression — and to foster peaceful, productive and sustainable human progress. In this respect, "An Agenda for Development" offers a unique opportunity to make the issue of economic and social development a central priority of the multilateral system. Promotion of sustained economic growth and eradication of poverty in the developing countries, as well as the legitimate leadership that the United Nations should show in this field, must also be key objectives of the Agenda.

My country hopes that the negotiations on the Agenda for Development being held by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on An Agenda for Development will conclude promptly and successfully in the course of the fifty-first session of the Assembly. The completion of this work will be a point of departure because it will give rise to firm commitments and mark the beginning of the task of putting the actions agreed upon into practice.

Honduras, as a peace-loving country, reaffirms its total support for the principles and objectives seeking the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and to establish a universal, verifiable, multilateral and effective machinery that will help to promote nuclear disarmament and to prevent proliferation of such weapons in all its aspects.

Consistent with these principles, I am pleased to announce that Honduras has signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty at this session of the General Assembly, and I would venture to appeal to all States Members of the United Nations to sign it as soon as possible. We would also urge all States possessing nuclear weapons to take resolute steps to reduce them with a view to their elimination.

The existence of landmines and other undetonated explosive devices in various regions of the world is a tremendous humanitarian problem and a grave threat to the security, health and survival of the local population where these deadly devices have been scattered. These devices prevent the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes in the States affected by this ongoing menace and impede humanitarian operations and programmes, national reconstruction and economic development activities and peacekeeping operations.

For this reason, we urge Member States, particularly those that have the capacity to do so, to lend their assistance to the affected countries, including those of the Central American region, with a view to establishing and refining national mine-clearance mechanisms. We also appeal to the international community finally to agree on the total prohibition of the production, exportation, sale and use of anti-personnel mines.

My delegation wishes once again to place on record its interest in seeing the Republic of China in Taiwan admitted as a Member of the United Nations. At this moment in time, when democratic systems of government and the rule of law are gaining ground in most of the nations that make up this Organization, it seems contradictory to continue excluding the Republic of China in Taiwan from participation. This is a country which struggled determinedly for democracy and succeeded in establishing it this year with the election of a Government by the direct vote of the majority of its people. This is a nation that respects human rights, possesses one of the strongest economies on earth and has been constantly struggling to eradicate poverty, and whose population of 21 million people enjoys an enviable cultural level. In short, the Republic of China in Taiwan fully meets the requirements established in the Charter for membership of the United Nations.

For the developing countries, its participation in the various international forums would be extremely beneficial, since we would be able to draw on its valuable experience in cooperation programmes, as demonstrated when it occupied a seat in this General Assembly from the day it signed the Charter until 1971.

In this respect, my Government supports the resolution adopted on 19 July 1996 by the European Parliament entitled the "Role of Taiwan in International Organizations", which explicitly states its support for the idea that the Republic of China in Taiwan should have a greater level of recognition and representation in international agencies. It also urges the United Nations to establish a working group to study the possibility of its participation in the activities of the United Nations and its international agencies.

The problem of drug production is not as severe in the Central American region as it is elsewhere, although our countries are not unaffected by drug use. For this reason, on 21 June, the Ministers of the Interior of our region agreed to develop a plan of cooperation to fight this evil. In this regard, we support the initiative of convening a special session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1998 in order to strengthen the international strategy to combat narcotic drugs.

With a view to beginning to address the problem of the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system, 1996 could be a year of meditation and reflection. Calls have been made for a redefinition of the purposes of the Organization and, in particular, of the tasks of the Security Council. In order to achieve this important task, we must work on the basis of a shared and balanced vision of the future of the Organization. The construction of a culture of international peace, security and prosperity should be the ultimate goal in this redefinition of tasks. This is something that the United Nations must accomplish in response to the needs of our peoples.

As we approach the end of the century and the millennium, the globality of economies and the grouping of countries into systems of integration are becoming irreversible facts. One consequence of this will be the resurgence of mega-States in which smaller States will remain submerged. We are concerned for the future of weaker and less developed nations which, like ours, require great external and internal efforts to retain the identity that distinguishes them from the rest of the world.

The right of peoples to decide their own destiny on the basis of sovereignty is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. This right must be observed in the new

world order if we wish to preserve, as is our duty, peace and cultural plurality among nations.

The Acting President: I now call on the Ambassador, Permanent Representative and Head of delegation of the Republic of Rwanda, His Excellency, Mr. Gideon Kayinamura.

Mr. Kayinamura (Rwanda): Permit me to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail on his unanimous election to preside over this session. His election is a reaffirmation by the United Nations Member States of the confidence that they have placed in him and in the Government of Malaysia. In this regard, I should like to assure him of the cooperation of the delegation of the Republic of Rwanda in our shared desire to galvanize the community of nations in their common resolve to fulfil the objectives of the United Nations Charter. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for presiding over the fiftieth session of the General Assembly in a most efficient and able manner.

The session over which Mr. Razali is presiding will be addressing a considerable agenda of more than 155 items, which, when put together, will contribute to world peace, security and stability. The United Nations is the most appropriate forum to discuss these and other related matters of global peace, development and international cooperation. The agenda before us therefore seeks to address the implementation of the objectives of the Charter, as enshrined in Article 1.

As we move towards the twenty-first century, it is our individual and collective responsibility to re-examine the extent to which our countries have or have not contributed to the attainment of these objectives. The United Nations Agenda for Peace and its valuable initiatives on peacekeeping, human rights and other development-related issues — collective security, terrorism, denuclearization, conflict prevention and resolution — will be discussed during the session. Rwanda would like to join its voice to those of the delegations that spoke from this rostrum and who called for world peace, security and the development of developing countries.

Statements have been made from this rostrum in connection with what some have described as the ghastly events that took place in Rwanda in 1994. Many, perhaps inadvertently and in a simplistic manner, have described the events of 1994 in Rwanda as a conflict, a crisis, ghastly events or as gross violations of human rights. There was genocide in Rwanda, nothing else but a genocide. It was not a tribal or ethnic conflict, as it is often referred to.

Between April and July 1994 more than one million Rwandans were butchered in a systematic and planned manner. This carnage was carried out in only 98 days. The devastating effects of the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide are still with us, and we live with them. Rwanda's population now consists of 70 per cent women, 60 per cent of whom are widows, and we have 400,000 orphans in the country.

The perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide are still at large in some capitals. Far from feeling remorse, they pride themselves in their unfinished agenda. Their army, militia and political leadership are in military and refugee camps within walking distance of the Rwanda-Zaire border. They have recently stepped up infiltrations into Rwanda in order to kill the remaining survivors of genocide.

We call upon the international community to exert pressure on the Government of Zaire to relocate the refugees away from its borders with Rwanda, in conformity with the 1951 Geneva convention (relating to the Status of Refugees).

The withdrawal of United Nations peacekeeping troops in April 1994, at the height of the execution of the genocidal agenda, was not helpful. For us in Rwanda, it remains, and will continue to remain, a reminder of the responsibility of the United Nations to ensure that this does not reoccur anywhere else. More importantly, it points to the need for the United Nations to support Rwanda in its efforts to rebuild its socio-economic infrastructure. This is critical. There can be no sustainable peace without reconstruction and development. The recent high-level symposium on conflicts in Africa, which was held in Tokyo this month, on 9 and 10 September, came to the same conclusion.

Allow me to put on record my Government's appreciation of the efforts made by those countries, institutions and humanitarian agencies that helped and continue to assist Rwanda in the various sectoral rehabilitation programmes. We are equally grateful to those who have shown their disposition to do so in the near future.

The recently concluded round table conference, which was organized with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has been

helpful. We are grateful for the commitments that were made. This will go a long way in assisting Rwanda to consolidate and build on the achievements of the past two years.

The Government of National Unity of Rwanda, under the leadership of His Excellency President Pasteur Bizimungu, has made significant strides to return the country to normalcy. Tremendous achievements have been made, including the gradual and steady rehabilitation of the security structure, the judiciary, the legislature and the economy. The sound macroeconomic policies that have been adopted have contributed, in less than two years, to a reduction in inflation from 60 per cent in 1994 to 10 per cent in 1996. This will drop to 5 per cent by the end of 1997. Agricultural production has reached 70 per cent of the pre-war level, and we have recorded impressive levels of food production.

We are also pleased to inform the international community that more than 2.2 million refugees have now returned to Rwanda. All Rwandan refugees originally based in Burundi have been repatriated and successfully resettled in their own communities without incident. This is sufficient proof that Rwandan refugees in other neighbouring countries, apart from being the hostages of genocidal leaders in the refugee camps, have no other reasons to remain.

These achievements have been made in spite of some critical factors that the international community could help Rwanda overcome if we are to maintain the pace of our continuing progress towards stability, durable peace and development.

The crippling debt burden has hamstrung all social sectors, especially the most vulnerable groups. Children, women, widows and the elderly are among the most affected. Rwanda's debt stock at the end of 1995 stood at a staggering high of $1 billion, or 91 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Most of this, 84 per cent, is owed to multilateral institutions; 13 per cent is bilateral; and the remaining 3 per cent is on account of suppliers' credits. Given the magnitude of this suffocating debt, the Government cannot rebuild its shattered socio-economic infrastructure in the aftermath of genocide. We therefore urge the international community, and especially the multilateral financial and development institutions, to cancel immediately Rwanda's debt. Short of new resources in the form of a Marshall Plan, this cancellation would greatly contribute to Rwanda's recovery and sustainable growth. We know very well that where there has been a significant infusion of financial resources in post-war periods, peace and stability have been achieved and sustained.

The question of conflicts and insecurity in the Great Lakes region has been mentioned by many speakers. The situation in Burundi is cause for concern to many, especially the countries of the region. I should like in this regard to commend the efforts of the Organization of African Unity, the leaders of the region and all those who are involved in the search for a durable solution.

Regional instability has been complicated by the systematic persecution of Kinyarwanda-speaking Zaireans. This process was stepped up this year with the massacre of several North Kivu region Zaireans of Rwandese culture; others were forced to flee to Rwanda and Uganda. This persecution has recently been extended to the South Kivu region of Zaire, where, again, Kinyarwanda-speaking Zaireans have been subjected to brutal attacks by Zairean forces, along with former Rwanda Government soldiers and *interahamwe* militias, who did not finish but exported their genocidal and "ethnic cleansing" agenda.

Survivors of these attacks — predominantly women and children, as men and boys are either killed or imprisoned — have been forced to seek refuge in Rwanda. It is the responsibility of the Government of Zaire to unconditionally repatriate its nationals who are currently living in refugee camps in Rwanda. We call upon the international community to prevail upon the Government of Zaire so as to stop the systematic "ethnic cleansing" currently taking place in eastern Zaire. We further call upon the Government of Zaire to cease immediately its military aggression which has recently been directed against Rwandan territory.

We would like to pay tribute to Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, for his unequivocal and genuine search for solutions, not only for Burundi, but also within the wider context of the Great Lakes region.

The problem is not the lack of solutions. What is lacking is the decisiveness to implement commitments voluntarily entered into. That is what should be addressed. In the case of the Great Lakes region, former Presidents Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Jimmy Carter of the United States of America and General Touré of Mali successfully managed to get the Heads of State and

Government to agree and sign solemn declarations on the modalities for solving the problems of the region.

At this session, we will be considering the re-election of the Secretary-General. My Government's position has been clear since Yaoundé, during the summit of the Organization of African Unity. We are not supportive of the re-election of the incumbent. Doing so would reward his failure to use the instruments of the United Nations Charter in order to come to the rescue of Rwandans during the genocide. Above all, it would be against the collective conscience of the Rwandan people to support the candidacy of the incumbent. But beyond these moral grounds, we believe that the election of a contested Secretary-General is not in the interest of the United Nations. It would jeopardize the functioning of an institution that needs to be strengthened.

The Acting President: I now call on the Ambassador, Permanent Representative and Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Estonia, Mr. Trivimi Velliste.

Mr. Velliste (Estonia): Let me begin by congratulating Mr. Razali Ismail on his assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. I am confident that his valuable guidance will lead to the successful outcome of this session. He has the assurance of our full support.

As an introduction, let me recall that this September marks the fifth anniversary of Estonia's return to the international scene. It was five years ago that the Estonian blue, black and white tricolour was hoisted in front of this forum. That moment was equal in historic and emotional significance to the one 70 years earlier, in September 1921 in Geneva, when Estonia was welcomed as a new member of the League of Nations — an international organization whose history has taught the world many lessons.

The cold war is over. Nevertheless, the international community continues to seek further guarantees of a more secure future for our children and grandchildren. In this respect, Estonia would like to express satisfaction at the recent overwhelming support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty adopted by the General Assembly. The signing ceremony at the United Nations on 24 September was an important milestone, a result of continued negotiations and at the same time a sign of hope for the future. We firmly believe that the Treaty can make an important contribution to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and promoting international security. The United Nations must now give a clear response to people who want to live in a world free of any threats of nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction.

Our world is facing new challenges. These new challenges require a renewed United Nations. At the last session, considerable efforts were made to reform the Organization. This work will continue during the current session. In fact, one of the principal goals of the session ahead of us will be to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations. Estonia welcomes the progress made in this area. There are still a number of ways by which the United Nations can further improve its performance. We attach particular importance to the review of the working methods of the functional commissions and expert groups and bodies of the Economic and Social Council, as well as to better coordination between the work of the Second and Third Committees.

Estonia is looking forward to active participation in United Nations-reform working groups. We attach specific importance to the financial reform of the Organization. Estonia is supportive of the view that the United Nations should be put on a sounder financial footing. Member States should make every effort to fulfil their obligation to pay their arrears without any conditions. At the same time, we share the understanding that the United Nations scale of assessments should be revised. The new scale of assessments must be fair and more transparent. It should also better reflect the fundamental principle of capacity to pay. We hope that the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations will achieve a comprehensive and consensus solution to the current financial difficulties of the Organization.

The reform of the Organization will also include changes in the composition and working methods of the Security Council. We welcome the decision by the General Assembly mandating the relevant Open-ended Working Group to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. At the same time, we hope that, along the lines of the mandate of the Working Group, Member States can bring about a resolution to the long-standing discussions on Security Council enlargement.

Peacekeeping continues to be one of the important activities of the Organization. Recent years have seen a changing role for United Nations peacekeeping missions. Today they have grown into manifold and diversified types of action. A new challenge for United Nations peacekeepers is dealing with internal conflicts throughout

the world. In this respect, I would like to reiterate that regional peacekeeping efforts that are conducted under the auspices of the United Nations must remain under stringent United Nations control.

Estonia is continuing to take part in United Nations peacekeeping. This autumn we will increase our contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping forces by offering a company to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The company will be deployed in the Norwegian battalion. The deployment is part of a joint project to develop a Baltic peacekeeping battalion. That battalion will be the contribution of the Baltic States to the strengthening of United Nations peacekeeping capacities. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Governments that have contributed to this common Baltic project.

During the past year Estonia has taken further steps towards the implementation and follow-up of the major United Nations Conferences — Rio, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul. To this end, a special inter-ministerial commission has been established in Estonia. Since the critical areas of concern of many of the conferences overlap, we are also looking forward to a better coordination of their outcomes.

Last year important work was done by the Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court in elaborating the text of a statute for such a court. We welcome that work and look forward to further progress during the fifty-first session.

Failure to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms is a major cause of conflict. Many intra-State conflicts arise from the denial of basic human rights. The Vienna World Conference on Human Rights made it clear that the promotion and protection of all human rights is a duty for all States. Estonia reaffirms its continued commitment to human rights. In spite of the hardships of institutional and economic transition, we have been able to make democracy a way of life. Human rights for all residents of Estonia is an inextricable part of Estonian democracy.

We continue to place particular importance upon the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. José Ayala Lasso, the Centre for Human Rights and United Nations human rights machinery in general. A transparent functioning of this machinery should rely on impartial reporting and disregard politically motivated allegations. Failure to do so would seriously damage the credibility of the Organization. Owing to very recent memories, this issue is of special importance to Estonia. This is also one of the reasons why Estonia lists among its priorities issues regarding indigenous peoples and human rights.

Estonia believes that it is essential to secure adequate financing for the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. At the same time, we would like to point out that various regional organizations that focus on human rights issue periodic reports regarding such matters. In order to avoid duplication and to make effective use of resources, the United Nations human rights machinery should rely on the extensive expertise of regional organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. Those two organizations foster the basic foundations of security and stability in Europe. The United Nations should further enhance its ties with them, especially with the Council of Europe, the established stronghold of human rights on the European continent and a symbol of cooperation between nations striving for an open and mutually beneficial dialogue. Estonia, the current Chairman of the Council of Europe, is pursuing policies of positive engagement in relations with all countries, including our eastern neighbour. In this respect, it is our sincere hope that the Russian Federation will reciprocate our efforts.

In conclusion, let me underline our commitment to contribute, together with all Member States, to the establishment of a world community in which individuals and States may live in peace and understanding. Let me express our sincere hope for a better world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I would like to note that, thanks to the praiseworthy punctuality of delegations, we have saved time, even though the list of speakers for this meeting was longer than usual: we have heard seven speakers instead of six. Thus, we can see that punctuality and the brevity of statements really do pay off.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.